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Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2296 (2016), by which the Council extended the mandate of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) until 30 June 2017 and requested me to report every 90 days on its implementation. The report provides an update and analysis of the conflict, the political situation and the operational environment in Darfur, including the main challenges to the effective implementation of the mandate, during the period from 15 December 2016 until 15 March 2017. It also presents the steps taken by UNAMID towards achieving its benchmarks and provides an update on the transfer of tasks to the United Nations country team, as well as the development of an exit strategy for UNAMID.

II. Conflict dynamics and the security situation

2. During the reporting period the level of armed confrontations in Darfur continued to subside, with no major fighting between the Government and rebel groups reported, including in the Jebel Marra. The Government maintained military dominance, achieved through its previous campaigns against the rebels, and signed several peace agreements with breakaway factions. Similarly, there were fewer incidents of intercommunal clashes than during the previous period, owing in part to the conclusion of the harvest season, as well as interventions by local authorities, with the support of UNAMID, to prevent further escalation and promote reconciliation. Attacks against internally displaced persons and other civilians over land, water and other livelihood issues continued, however, particularly by armed militias. Criminal groups, emboldened by the availability of weapons, also committed acts of violence against civilians and Government personnel. The overall scale of internal displacement remained unchanged. Despite improved security, conflict dynamics in Darfur reflected the volatility and unpredictability of the conditions on the ground, and the lack of tangible progress in addressing the causes and consequences of the conflict.

Fighting between the forces of the Government of the Sudan and armed movements

3. The unilateral ceasefire announced on 10 October 2016 by the President of the Sudan, Omar Hassan A. Al-Bashir, was extended for one month on 31 December,

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and for an additional six months on 15 January 2017. Similarly, the six-month ceasefire declared on 30 October 2016 by the rebel coalition, the Sudanese Revolutionary Front, remained in place.

4. There were no reports indicating clashes between the Government forces and any of the rebel groups, including the Abdul Wahid and Minni Minawi factions of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA/AW and SLA/MM) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). Nevertheless, tensions involving SLA/AW elements continued in Sortony, North Darfur, where civilians had fled from the previous round of fighting in the Jebel Marra. On 26 December 2016, 18 members of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) travelling in two armed vehicles attempted to enter the camp for internally displaced persons in Sortony, for unknown reasons, but left when UNAMID troops approached. On 14 January 2017, after sounds of gunshots were heard over two consecutive days in Sortony, two internally displaced persons sought medical treatment from UNAMID personnel, claiming to have been attacked by Arab militia. UNAMID was prevented from evacuating one of the wounded, who subsequently died, as the SLA/AW commander in the area, Al Sadiq Adam Abdulkarim, demanded that all UNAMID movements be ceased immediately. On 21 January, Adam Abdulkarim defected and signed a peace agreement with the Government in El Fasher, which stipulated the integration of Abdulkarim and an estimated 500 combatants into SAF. Tensions in Sortony have since increased. On 9 March, internally displaced persons threatened to expel those who had defected to the Government from the camp unless UNAMID removed them within 48 hours.

Local conflicts and intercommunal violence

5. Intercommunal violence continued to pose threats against civilians throughout Darfur. Although the current reporting period saw a reduction in the number of violent incidents over the preceding period, the level of insecurity was approximately the same as the corresponding period a year ago. A total of eight instances of local conflicts and intercommunal violence resulting in 45 fatalities were recorded over the past three months, a slight decrease from the eight clashes and 118 fatalities recorded in the previous period, and reflected the easing of tensions between farmers and herders at the end of the harvest season, as well as reconciliation efforts by the Government and UNAMID. In Central and West Darfur, Arab militias clashed with Fur and Massalit farmers, respectively, while similarly deadly rivalries erupted between Arab tribes, such as the Beni Hussein and Northern Rezeigat in North Darfur and the Ma'alia and Southern Rezeigat in East Darfur. The hostilities were related to unresolved disputes over land, livelihood and natural resources, and were exacerbated by the prevalence of weapons.

6. In Central Darfur, a series of fights between the Fur and Misseriya tribes in Mukjar, originating in an interpersonal dispute at the local market, resulted in the deaths of three Fur between 22 and 24 December 2016. Subsequently, SAF and police personnel enhanced their presence, and a peace agreement was signed on 28 January 2017. In the Um Dukhun area, following clashes between the Misseriya and Rezeigat over personal disputes, two Misseriya and one Rezeigat were killed on 25 January 2017, and on 29 January the Rezeigat community agreed to compensate the Misseriya for the loss of the member of its community.

7. In West Darfur, on 5 January 2017, the Awlad Zaid subclan of the Northern Rezeigat clashed with Massalit farmers in El Geneina over livestock disputes, and six Massalit were killed. Massalit farmers were also attacked, and 11 injured, by armed Arabs in the Arara area on 19 January, reportedly in retaliation for their involvement in the arrest of an Arab nomad by the Sudanese police. In the vicinity of Sileah, a group of Rezeigat ambushed Zaghawa tribesmen over allegations of theft on 29 January, despite an agreement on the cessation of hostilities reached in

December 2016, and two Zaghawa and two Rezeigat were reportedly killed. As the two sides continued to mobilize, joint forces of the Sudan and Chad were deployed to contain the situation.

8. Notwithstanding their 2014 peace agreement, tensions were revived between the Beni Hussein and Northern Rezeigat communities in North Darfur, particularly in El Sereif, where the former community continued to face access restrictions around the Jebel Amer gold mines, which are controlled by the latter. The relationship between the two communities also deteriorated in the village of Jemeza owing to the refusal by the Northern Rezeigat to vacate land that had been occupied by the Beni Hussein until the latter fled in 2013, following intensive intercommunal fighting over access to the gold mines. On 11 January 2017, disputes relating to cattle theft between the Beni Hussein and the Awlad Zaid clan of the Northern Rezeigat in El Sireaf led to the abduction of two Beni Hussein. The two groups reached an agreement on 18 January 2017, and on 13 February the Sudanese Minister of Mineral Resources visited the area and held discussions with both groups.

9. In East Darfur, the Southern Rezeigat and Ma'alia tribes clashed near Abu Karinka on 1 and 18 February 2017 over disputes relating to cattle theft. On 19 February, a firefight following the destruction of a Berti farm by the Agarba subclan of the Ma'alia in Al Naeir, east of Abu Karinka, resulted in the death of seven Berti. Government forces were deployed to the area, but on 20 February, members of the Berti community attacked and burned two Ma'alia villages outside Abu Karinka. In total, 17 Berti and 3 Ma'alia were reported to have been killed in the series of incidents. A UNAMID verification patrol reached Abu Karinka on 21 February, but the National Intelligence and Security Services and police personnel prevented it from proceeding further, citing the lack of prior coordination with the Government. The Security Service also delayed endorsement of another patrol, planned for 23 February, resulting in its cancellation.

10. In South Darfur, on 23 December 2016, a clash triggered by the Awlad Rashid subclan of the Ta'aisha tribe destroyed farms belonging to the Berno community in the area east of Rehade El Berdit, leaving 8 Berno and 1 Awlad Rashid dead. Government forces were deployed to the area, and the two parties signed a reconciliation agreement on 28 December 2016.

Violence against internally displaced persons

11. During the reporting period, internally displaced persons were targeted in 249 incidents, leading to 31 fatalities, most of which were perpetrated by Government forces, including the border guards and the Rapid Support Forces. They faced various forms of violence, including attacks against their camps, sexual and gender-based violence and criminal incidents. Locations with the highest number of such incidents included the areas of Kutum, Sortony, and Tawilla in North Darfur, Zalingei and Nertiti in Central Darfur, Kalma and Otash in South Darfur, and El Geneina and Kereinik in West Darfur.

12. In Central Darfur, on 17 December 2016, four armed men entered the Khamsadagaig camp for internally displaced persons near Zalingei and fired sporadic shots into the air. On 27 December, the Ereigat subclan of the Northern Rezeigat entered the North camp for internally displaced persons, near Nertiti, and threatened the Fur who were living there, accusing them of cattle theft. Following this event, SAF deployed to the area, but a similar incident took place on the same day in the Straha camp, also in the vicinity of Nertiti, where approximately 150 armed Arab nomads entered the camp in search of cattle and intimidated its residents. On 1 January 2017, SAF and police personnel who entered and opened fire in the Ghabat East and Straha camps, reportedly searching for suspects involved

in the killing of an SAF soldier on 31 December, killed two internally displaced persons in the Ghabat East camp. The Deputy Governor of Central Darfur visited Nertiti to address the matter, but on 2 January 2017, local residents reported that SAF soldiers entered the North camp once again and robbed two internally displaced persons from the Fur community.

13. In North Darfur, on 18 December 2016, Arab nomads assaulted a UNAMID truck driver belonging to the Fur tribe at a water point in Kube near the Sortony camp for internally displaced persons. They subsequently warned Fur from the camp that they should not collect water in Kube. On 2 February 2017, armed Arabs stole animals from internally displaced persons and ambushed Government forces near Tawilla, which resulted in the killing of four officers. In South Darfur, on 17 January, a resident of the Kalma camp for internally displaced person was killed and another was injured while tracking the assailants. The following day, a UNAMID patrol took the wounded man to a police station, where they were surrounded by armed Arabs who fired shots in the air. In response, SAF and police personnel were dispatched to the area. Random night shooting was also reported in the Ardamata, Abu Zar, and Riyadh camps in West Darfur, and the El Neem camp in East Darfur.

Crime and banditry

14. A total of 673 criminal incidents and 106 fatalities were recorded between 15 December 2016 and 15 March 2017, compared with 659 incidents and 122 fatalities during the previous reporting period. Incidents included assault/harassment (181 cases), shooting (138 cases), murder (84 cases), armed robbery (57cases), burglary/break-ins (47 cases), livestock theft (42 cases), abduction (44 cases), attempted robbery (16 cases), threats of violence (18 cases), attack/ambush (18 cases), looting (7 cases), arson (7 cases) and other incidents (10 cases).

15. On a number of occasions, criminal incidents involved armed militias attacking Government personnel on duty. In Central Darfur, on 26 December 2016, a group of Arab men assaulted a convoy of the Central Reserve Police in the Shawa area, east of Zalingei, injuring four police officers. On the following day, Arab men reportedly attacked an SAF convoy in Jebel Ahmer, west of Zalingei, killing one soldier. On 6 March 2017, heavy shooting erupted when Government forces prevented a group of border guards from entering Zalingei to protest delays in salary payment. During the violence, one member of the Arab militia was killed and three stray bullets hit UNAMID facilities, however, there were no injuries to peacekeepers. In North Darfur, two SAF soldiers were wounded in an exchange of fire with armed robbers at the Tine market on 9 January. On 2 February a search operation carried out by members of the police and the Popular Defence Forces for a group of armed Arabs who had attacked two Fur internally displaced persons from the old Rwanda camp the day before came under attack by an unidentified group, as a result of which two Sudanese police officers and two members of the Popular Defence Forces were killed. In East Darfur, on 31 December, a Sudanese police officer was seriously injured when armed men attacked and killed an ambulance driver in the vicinity of Sireish village. In West Darfur, a Sudanese police officer was shot in Masteri town on 3 January 2017, and subsequently died. The perpetrators sized his weapons and fled.

III. Political developments

Darfur peace process

16. On 20 December 2016, the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, represented by former Presidents Thabo Mbeki and Abdulsalami Abubakar, met with President Al-Bashir and discussed, among other items, the Darfur peace process. President Al-Bashir reiterated the position of the Government that further talks with non-signatories to the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur would be aimed at negotiating an additional protocol to the agreement. Subsequently, the non-signatories held two consultations on the way forward. Following a meeting with President of Uganda, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, in Kampala on 24 December 2016, representatives of SLA/MM and JEM/Gibril Ibrahim issued a joint statement emphasizing that the implementation of the road map agreement signed between the Government and the opposition coalition, the "Sudan Call", in October 2016 was a prerequisite for the reactivation of the peace process. The Sudan Call held its leadership council meeting in Paris from 16 to 20 January 2017, after which it stated the revitalization of the road map agreement would require a redesigning of the entire peace process, referring to emerging political developments.

17. Meanwhile, negotiations held under the auspices of the President of Chad, Idriss Déby Itno, between the Sudanese authorities and a breakaway group of SLA/AW called SLA/Second Revolution, culminated in their signing of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur on 23 January 2017.

National Dialogue process

18. In line with the recommendations of the National Dialogue, the National Assembly endorsed amendments to the constitution on 26 December 2016, which included: the creation of a Government of National Reconciliation with a four-year mandate; a post of Prime Minister within the framework of the presidential system; modifications to the composition of the National Assembly and state legislative councils; and the separation of the posts of Attorney General and Minister of Justice. The opposition parties, referring to numerous arrests made since November 2016 in connection with the protests against subsidy cuts, demanded that constitutional amendments also include guarantees for political freedom. The leaders of the seven opposition parties that had participated in the National Dialogue process met with the Dialogue Implementation Committee on 28 December 2016, and proposals for additional constitutional amendments were submitted to the National Assembly on 18 January 2017. Those proposals are currently under review by a parliamentary committee established to study them. On 1 March 2017, President Al-Bashir appointed the First Vice-President, Lieutenant Colonel Barki Hasan Saleh, to the post of Prime Minister. He was sworn in on the following day, while maintaining his post as First Vice-President. In his new role, Prime Minister Saleh will oversee the implementation of the outcome of the National Dialogue, including the formation of a Government of National Reconciliation following the dissolution of the current Government on 2 March 2017. The reaction of the opposition parties was muted, with some preferring the status quo rather than transformation.

19. Invoking the recommendations of the National Dialogue, on 8 January 2017, the Government also submitted a bill before the National Assembly to shift the command of the Rapid Support Forces from the National Intelligence and Security Service to SAF. On 9 January, a group of Arabs threatened to attack Zalingei in Central Darfur if their demands for the enrolment into SAF were not satisfied. On 16 January, the National Assembly unanimously adopted the Rapid Support Forces Act, providing that the Rapid Support Forces would belong to the Ministry of

Defense and operate under the direct command of the Commander-in-Chief of SAF. The opposition parties have criticized the decision as contrary to the spirit of the National Dialogue, which seeks accountability in governance.

20. Following the civil disobedience campaigns launched in November 2016 to protest subsidy cuts in fuel and electricity, another call on the pubic to stay at home was made on 19 December. In Darfur, although schools and Government offices remained open, UNAMID observed that approximately 30 to 50 per cent of shops closed in most state capitals, except in East Darfur, and that fewer vehicles and pedestrians were in evidence. UNAMID also noted an increased presence of security personnel in key areas of cities. On 20 December, the National Intelligence and Security Service seized all copies of *Al Tayyar, Al-Saiha, Al Ayam and Al-Ahram Al-Youm* daily newspapers, allegedly for having published articles supporting the call for civil disobedience.

21. On 13 January 2017, the outgoing President of the United States of America signed an executive order for the revocation of Sudan-related sanctions for a period of 180 days, although interaction with individuals associated with the conflict in Darfur was still prohibited. President Al-Bashir welcomed the step, while the reactions of the Sudanese opposition groups were varied, with the National Umma Party, the National Congress Party and SLA/MM and SLA/AW criticizing the decision as inconsistent with the lack of progress on the ground, while representatives of JEM made positive remarks.

22. On 26 January 2017, the Chair of the National Umma Party and the former Prime Minister, Imam Al Sadiq al-Mahdi, returned to the Sudan after two years of exile in Egypt, where he had sought refuge after being accused by the Government of conspiring with armed rebels in 2014.

23. On 8 March 2017, following the release of 125 Sudanese prisoners of war by the Sudan Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-North), facilitated by the President of Uganda, President Al-Bashir issued a decree granting a pardon to 259 combatants captured during previous clashes, which included the commuting of death sentences against 66 members of the Gibril Ibrahim faction of JEM (JEM/Gibril) and the SLA/MM. The President also granted a general amnesty to 181 JEM/Gibril combatants and 12 members of SLM/AW and SLA/MM factions involved in battles with the Government forces in 2015.

IV. Humanitarian situation

24. No new displacement has been reported thus far in 2017. Of 97,400 people who were newly displaced in 2016, approximately 39,600 people have reportedly returned, including some 25,500 who were verified and assisted by the World Food Programme (WFP) in Golo, Central Darfur. An additional roughly 99,400 people who were also reportedly displaced during 2016 remained unverified, due to access constraints in some locations.

25. Humanitarian agencies distributed food and provided emergency shelter and non-food items, as well as nutrition, education, water, sanitation and hygiene support in Golo, following the joint mission by the Government and the United Nations country team to the Jebel Marra from 8 to 13 December 2016. While internally displaced persons received basic humanitarian assistance, gaps were identified in the areas of water, sanitation and hygiene, protection and livelihoods.

V. Operating environment

Attacks and restrictions of movement on and denials of access to the mission

26. During the reporting period, the level of security incidents affecting United Nations personnel and property increased modestly over the previous period, with 50 criminal incidents reported (in comparison to 32 in the previous period) in cases of: arrest/detention (2 cases), threat (1 case), assault/injury (2 cases), trespassing (8 cases), theft (8 cases), theft attempts (5 cases), harassment/intimidation (2 cases), carjacking (1 case) damage/stone throwing (19 cases), and damage to United Nations property (2 cases).

27. Several incidents involved locally recruited personnel of UNAMID. On 28 and 29 December 2016, a total of four UNAMID national staff members were arrested by the National Intelligence and Security Services in El Fasher, accused of illegally exchanging currency, but were subsequently released. On 6 January 2017, unidentified armed men assaulted and injured a UNAMID national staff member at the Alardeeba market, west of El Geneina. UNAMID has not been granted access to a national staff member arrested on 23 November 2016 by the National Intelligence and Security Services in Nyala, South Darfur, for an alleged security violation. The staff member remains in Government custody as of 15 March.

28. The freedom of movement of UNAMID continued to be hindered by the Government. As of 15 March 2017, UNAMID ground patrols had been denied access in 13 cases and their movements had been restricted in 4 cases, compared to the 67 restrictions imposed by the Government and internally displaced young people during the previous reporting period. The cases of denied access included repeated movement restrictions in Abu Karinka and Um Kadada, in North Darfur, and Buram, South Darfur, and interruptions of patrols to camps for internally displaced persons, including the Neem camp in East Darfur, the Rwanda and Dabaneira camps in North Darfur, and the Kass camp in South Darfur. On 14 March, SAF threatened to shoot down a UNAMID helicopter on its way from Nyala, South Darfur, to El Daein, East Darfur, for allegedly flying over its camp.

29. With regard to air movements, UNAMID planned 2,755 sorties from 16 December 2016 to 15 March 2017, of which 11 were denied by the authorities, compared to 51 denied sorties during the previous reporting period. Despite the decrease in flight cancellations as a result of improved coordination between the Government and UNAMID, bureaucratic impediments continued to challenge the mobility of the Mission. Direct flights between team sites located in different sectors were not allowed, and hours of air operations continued to be limited by the Sudanese civil aviation authorities.

Attacks and access denials and restrictions imposed on humanitarian actors

30. On 17 January 2016, SLA/AW elements detained three local staff members subcontracted by an international aid organization and seized their vehicle at a construction site near Sortony, North Darfur, accusing them of being in possession of a firearm. The subcontractors were released several hours later, following negotiations led by UNAMID.

31. On 25 December 2016, the Humanitarian Aid Commission revised the directives and procedures for humanitarian action in the Sudan, which significantly eased the regulations for the delivery of humanitarian aid. This included revised travel procedures, whereby travel permits would be required only to localities in the Jebel Marra, certain locations in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states and border areas. The Sudanese authorities were still in the process of putting the new

directives into effect during the reporting period, and some delays and restrictions on travel requests continued to be recorded. However, there was a significant improvement in freedom of movement, particularly in processing travel documents.

32. As examples of improved access, an inter-agency mission to Al Lait, North Darfur, which had been pending since July 2016, was completed on 16 February 2017. Similarly, two inter-agency needs assessment missions for Belle Elserief and Deribat, in South Darfur, were approved by the authorities. The assessment to Belle Elserief was completed on 21 February, to be followed by a mission to Deribat once security conditions have improved.

Visas and customs clearances

33. The Government granted 439 visas for UNAMID, comprising 183 for military and police personnel; 170 for contractors; and 13 for international staff. As of 15 March 2017, 292 visa requests submitted since January 2016 remained pending, 47 of which were for international civilian staff. The vacancy rate for international civilian staff decreased from the last reporting period in some sections, namely human rights (from 46 to 43 per cent) and communications and public information (from 12 to 6 per cent).

34. While all pending food ration containers have been released from Port Sudan, customs clearance for 182 shipments of equipment owned by contingents of UNAMID and the United Nations remained held at Port Sudan and in Khartoum. A request for the clearance of equipment belonging to the military utility helicopter unit from China, submitted on 10 October 2016, has not been cleared by the customs authorities, while the ship carrying it has been docked at Port Sudan since 6 November 2016, accruing demurrage charges. Other shipments awaiting clearance, some for almost a year, contained communications facilities, vehicles and waste management systems. Additionally, the Government has not granted the certificate of exemption from taxation for goods imported by sea in 2016, which also compounded delays in the release of shipments from ports.

35. On 19 January 2017, at the airport at El Fasher, a number of additional firearms and ammunition equipment was found in the bulk luggage of an Indonesian formed police unit of UNAMID scheduled to depart the Sudan two days later. The discovered weapons were not part of the contingent-owned equipment list and were confiscated by the Sudanese authorities. An internal United Nations investigation was launched immediately to identify the source of the weapons, while the Government of Indonesia also dispatched personnel to follow up on the incident. The Government of the Sudan has also opened its own investigation into the incident. The findings of the investigation will be compiled shortly.

VI. Mandate implementation

A. Support for inclusive peace process

High-level mediation

36. The Acting Joint Special Representative continued to engage the non-signatories to the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur regarding the resumption of talks with the Government. In a letter dated 5 February 2017, the Acting Joint Special Representative conveyed to the non-signatories the outcome of the meeting between the Deputy Prime Minister of Qatar and the Envoy of the President of the Sudan concerning the negotiation and diplomatic communication on Darfur held in Doha on 11 December 2016. During the meeting, the Qatari and Sudanese officials

reaffirmed that it was important for the Government and the non-signatories to sign an agreement on the cessation of hostilities, and that further talks would be aimed at negotiating an additional protocol to the Doha Document. The non-signatories acknowledged receipt of the letter, in which they were asked to submit their proposals for the issues raised in the Doha Document, but they have not yet provided a response.

37. The Acting Joint Special Representative also held a series of discussions with various interlocutors, including briefings to the members of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel and the Deputy Prime Minister of Qatar on the status of consultations with the non-signatories, in order to ensure coordination and complimentarity with UNAMID efforts to support the peace process.

Implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur

38. On 6 January 2017, President Al-Bashir issued two decrees, one appointing Amin Hassan Omer as the Envoy of the President for the negotiation and diplomatic communication on Darfur, and the other appointing Magdi Khlafalla as Head of the Darfur Peace Follow-up Office, an entity that assumed responsibility for the implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur after the closure of the Darfur Regional Authority in September 2016. On 17 January, President Al-Bashir issued another decree appointing heads of the remaining bodies for the implementation of the Doha Document, namely the Darfur Land Commission, the Voluntary Return and Resettlement Commission, the Justice, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Darfur Security Arrangements Implementation Commission and the Darfur Reconstruction and Development Fund, which would report through the Darfur Peace Follow-up Office to the Minister and the Presidency. UNAMID continued to engage national and local interlocutors, including the new head of the Darfur Peace Follow-up Office, seeking modalities to support the successor bodies in addressing the outstanding issues of Doha Document. On 6 March, the 12th meeting of the Implementation Follow-up Commission for the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur was convened in Khartoum, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister of Qatar, to discuss the progress and challenges in the implementation of the Doha Document since its last meeting, held in Khartoum on 9 May 2016.

39. On 19 December 2016, in El Daein, East Darfur, UNAMID concluded the demobilization of 750 ex-combatants, in collaboration with the Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission. The demobilization exercise involved 134 ex-combatants from the JEM/Peace Wing, 222 from SLA/Mustapha Terab, 201 from SLA/Free Will and 193 from SLA/Peace Wing. UNAMID provided technical and logistical support, as well as the payment of transition safety allowances, and WFP delivered three-month's worth of dry rations. The Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission provided briefings on reintegration options; however, funding gaps have delayed the provision of reintegration assistance for 2,000 of the 5,738 ex-combatants who have been demobilized since 2014.

40. The third phase of the Darfur Internal Dialogue and Consultation started on 17 January 2017, and as at 15 March 2017, 16 of the 26 locality consultations were carried out in West, North, South and Central Darfur, including in Zalingei and Golo. Approximately 150 local interlocutors participated in each event, except in Beida, West Darfur, where representatives of the Misseriya community were absent. The consultation was yet to commence in East Darfur owing to a delay in financial reporting for the previous phase. Prior to the commencement of the exercise, UNAMID and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) organized a

preparatory workshop from 18 to 21 December 2016 for participants from the Dialogue Implementation Committee to improve their financial accounting.

B. Protection of civilians

41. In accordance with Security Council resolution 2296 (2016), UNAMID continued to focus its activities on protecting internally displaced persons and addressing intercommunal violence. In addition to implementing the strategy on intercommunal violence developed in 2016, UNAMID completed a review of its strategy on the protection of civilians on 21 February 2017, refining its approach by strengthening coordination throughout the Operation, providing greater clarity on roles and responsibilities of each component and enhancing training, communication and messaging on protection.

Provision of physical protection

42. On the basis of the mapping of the protection situation conducted during the last reporting period, UNAMID increased patrols in priority areas, including Shangil Tobaya, Sortony, Kabkabiya, Tawilla, Korma and Kutum in North Darfur, Nertiti and Mukjar in Central Darfur, Kalma and Greida in South Darfur and El Geneina, in West Darfur. In Sortony, North Darfur, UNAMID continued to provide around-the-clock patrols to deter attacks against the camp for internally displaced persons. From 29 to 31 January 2017, the Deputy Joint Special Representative (Protection) led an integrated team comprised of UNAMID and humanitarian personnel to Sortony, and engaged with a range of interlocutors, including nomad militia leaders, to discuss the cessation of violence, ways to ease tensions around the water point in Kube and the continued blockage of the road between Sortony and Kabkabiya.

43. In Central Darfur, UNAMID received clearance to visit parts of the Jebel Marra that had remained inaccessible since the resumption of fighting in 2014, including Koron, Sorong, Woodi and Wadi Boori around Golo, although access to Kutrum and Boldon was not approved on the pretext of concern for the security of UNAMID personnel. From 21 to 24 January 2017, UNAMID dispatched a reconnaissance mission, and while a road to Woodi and Wadi Boori proved impassable, the team reached Golo, Koron and Sorong, and observed Sarong to be largely abandoned and a number of houses in Koron destroyed. From 12 to 13 February, an assessment mission comprised of UNAMID and humanitarian personnel visited Golo, Koron, Sorong and Boori. Residents in Koron and Sorong reported the burning of their houses and farms, the establishment of numerous checkpoints to control their movements, as well as sexual abuse of women by Government forces.

44. From 15 December 2016 to 15 March 2017, UNAMID conducted a total of 25,326 military patrols, including 10,759 short-range patrols, 571 long-range patrols, and 3,058 night patrols, covering the total of 7,408 villages and 3,487 camps for internally displaced persons. In addition, the police personnel of UNAMID undertook 8,720 patrols, including 4,416 confidence-building patrols to camps for internally displaced persons and 4,304 patrols to respond to the security needs, particularly of women and children engaged in livelihood activities. As part of crime prevention initiatives in camps for internally displaced persons, 626 joint patrols involving 1,284 community policing volunteers were also conducted during the reporting period.

Logistical and security support to humanitarian operations

45. As at 15 March 2017, UNAMID had provided 420 round-trip escorts for United Nations and civil society humanitarian partners, in support of their delivery and the monitoring of humanitarian assistance and assessment missions. The occasions for these escorts included an assessment mission by the European Commission to South Darfur, humanitarian missions led by the United Nations Office for the Coordinator of Humanitarian Assistance to the Otash camp for internally displaced persons in South Darfur and to Tamar Bol and Jamil in Central Darfur.

Promoting a protective environment

46. UNAMID continued to monitor, report on and advocate the prevention of human rights violations and abuses, conflict-related sexual violence, sexual and gender-based violence and violations against children. UNAMID also provided technical support to strengthen the capacity of penal and judicial institutions and to reduce the risk posed to civilians by explosive remnants of war.

47. UNAMID documented 181 new cases of human rights violations and abuses involving 400 victims, including 31 children, during the reporting period, compared to 106 cases involving 214 victims during the previous reporting period. Violations of the right to life accounted for 46 cases involving 99 victims, including one child, and violations of the right to physical integrity accounted for 62 cases involving 167 victims, including two children. There were 44 cases of sexual and gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, in the form of rape and attempted rape involving 67 victims, including 23 children, and 15 cases of arbitrary arrest and illegal detention involving 42 victims. There were 14 abduction cases involving 25 victims. UNAMID confirmed 144 cases of human rights violations and abuses involving 298 victims, however, the remaining 37 cases involving 102 victims could not be verified, due to various access restrictions, including those imposed by the Government. Of the 181 reported cases, 41 cases involving 132 victims were reportedly perpetrated by Government security forces and associated groups. The remaining 140 cases, involving 268 victims, were allegedly perpetrated by unidentified armed men, some described by the victims as being Arabs.

48. As part of advocacy efforts, UNAMID raised the issue of arbitrary arrests and detentions affecting civilians at a meeting with the National Intelligence and Security Services on 8 January 2016, and expressed its concern about the continued denial of family visitation rights to detainees.

49. To increase the awareness and capacity of Government security personnel on issues relating to the protection of civilians, UNAMID conducted four training courses on human rights and basic criminal investigation for 143 male and 5 female police officers. To prevent crimes at the local level, 11 training courses on community policing, human rights, sexual exploitation and abuse and road safety awareness were provided to 429 internally displaced persons and community policing volunteers. UNAMID also commenced the implementation of 5 community stabilization projects in South Darfur, aimed at strengthening rule of law, education and livelihood skills for youth.

50. Initiatives to improve the effectiveness of penal and judicial institutions included 438 visits to police stations and detention facilities to monitor the conditions of accused persons, including children living with their incarcerated mothers, as well as sexual and gender-based violence in those facilities. In El Daein prison, East Darfur, UNAMID discovered that 374 inmates and 21 children, many of them South Sudanese refugees detained for alcohol-related offences, were held in a

facility with provisions meant for 95 persons. UNAMID secured the release of 11 female inmates and two children, and continued to advocate for the release of inmates in pro-longed and arbitrary detention. In addition, following advocacy from UNAMID, seven new magistrates were deployed to Kass, Buram, Tulus, Ed El Fursan and Nyala in South Darfur, and an additional two magistrates were deployed to El Daein, East Darfur, in January 2017, enhancing the efficiency and quality of trial processes.

51. UNAMID intensified its efforts to strengthen local capacity for protection in the event of the return or resettlement of internally displaced persons. Engagement with the police was accelerated in this context, and on 14 February 2017 a police training centre in El Fasher, established with support from UNAMID, was inaugurated and handed over to the Sudanese authorities. On 15 February, the first meeting of the police development coordination committee, comprising representatives from the Government, UNAMID and the United Nations country team, took place in El Fasher to further discuss capacity-development issues for the police.

52. Furthermore, with a view to supporting the re-establishment of the criminal justice chain in potential return areas, UNAMID undertook an assessment on the rule of law in the localities to which internally displaced persons were likely to return, including Kabkabiya, Mellit and Kutum in North Darfur, Habila, Mournei and Beida in West Darfur, and Shattaya in South Darfur. In Kutum, on 7 February 2017, UNAMID, together with UNDP and the Government, supported the rehabilitation and the reopening of a prison that had been closed since 2012. At the policy level, UNAMID supported a workshop from 22 to 23 February 2017 for 88 participants from the Ministry of Interior and academic institutions to finalize the standard operating procedures, strategic training framework and curricula and guidance manual for inspection and audit to be adopted at the national-level prison development committee meeting in March.

53. UNAMID also continued to raise awareness of child rights and child protection. It provided training to 406 female and 327 male beneficiaries, inclusive of 154 military personnel, 69 police personnel and 511 participants from civil society, camps for internally displaced persons and local child protection committees in North, South, Central and West Darfur. UNAMID continued to engage the Government and rebel groups on ending the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and on 25 January 2017, JEM reissued its command order to prohibit its members from recruiting and using child soldiers and prohibiting other grave violations.

54. Explosive ordnance continued to pose a threat in Darfur, with three incidents reported during the period under review, resulting in severe injury to five individuals. UNAMID deployed disposal teams across Darfur, with particular focus on areas where newly displaced persons were sheltered. Assessments on general explosive hazards were conducted in 22 villages, including 10 in North Darfur, 6 in South Darfur and 4 in West Darfur, as a result of which 1,187 items of unexploded ordnance and 11,474 small arms ammunition were located and destroyed. Between 15 December 2016 and 15 March 2017, UNAMID also conducted 865 education sessions on the risks connected to explosive remnants of war, particularly in areas with high number of internally displaced persons or reported accidents, benefitting 76,414 participants composed of 13,177 men, 9,368 women, 29,794 boys and 24,075 girls.

C. Local conflict mediation

55. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2296 (2016), UNAMID continued to implement the mission-wide strategy to prevent intercommunal violence, address existing conflicts and promote peaceful coexistence, engaging various stakeholders, including state governments, native administration and security agencies.

56. UNAMID conducted 10 dialogue forums for farmers and herders in Korma and Um Salaya in North Darfur, and the villages of Ashamara, Chakam Chakam, Habila and Nouri in Mournei, Kafaot and Um Sebeka in West Darfur. The participants, noting the increasing competition for water and pasture in fertile areas, the blocking of migratory routes and the absence of Government authority in some conflict-prone areas, recommended the establishment of water points along migratory routes, the rehabilitation of villages and the provision of basic services.

57. UNAMID also continued with mediation efforts to prevent or mitigate intercommunal conflict. On 19 January 2017, UNAMID conducted an integrated field mission visit to El Sereif, North Darfur, to discuss outstanding disagreements between the Beni Hussein and Northern Rezeigat over the Jebel Amer gold mines, water use, recurrent fighting between farmers and herders and other acts of criminality, including possible solutions to defuse the escalating tensions between the two groups. The mission was followed by a two-day peace conference from 13 to 14 March 2017 to address these issues. Following the fighting between Fur and Misseriya in Mukjar, Central Darfur, in December, UNAMID supported the efforts of a joint mediation committee with both communities, which facilitated a peace agreement between the two parties. Similarly, both prior to and after the signing of the peace agreement between the Massalit and Rezeigat in Graida, South Darfur, on 3 February 2017, UNAMID engaged with the state authorities and community representatives on the necessary steps for the conclusion and implementation of the agreement.

VII. Transfer of mandated tasks to the United Nations country team and exit strategy

A. Transfer of mandated tasks and cooperation with the United Nations country team

58. In accordance with Security Council resolutions 2228 (2015) and 2296 (2016), UNAMID continued efforts regarding the gradual transfer of tasks to the United Nations country team on the basis of comparative advantage and complementarity. On 24 January 2017, a memorandum of understanding was signed to implement the transfer of tasks relating to legal aid from UNAMID to UNDP, in line with the United Nations joint rule of law programme for Darfur. In the area of gender, UNAMID, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Fund for Populations Activities (UNFPA), UNDP and the Office of the Resident Coordinator continued to convene monthly forums to plan for the transfer of tasks, including a donor conference to support the implementation of transitioned tasks. The limited presence, capacity and resources of the United Nations country team remained a serious obstacle to the further transfer of tasks.

B. Exit strategy

59. Further to Security Council resolution 2296 (2016) and the communiqué of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union of 13 June 2016, the United Nations and the African Union continued discussions with the Government on the implementation of the benchmarks of UNAMID as the basis of its exit strategy within the framework of the joint working group. The group met in Khartoum on 26 February 2017 to finalize the report drafted during its previous sessions, held in October and November 2016. The report, which acknowledged the positive developments that had been achieved, as well as locations where further progress was required in relation to the political, security, humanitarian and the rule of law areas, called for progress in the transfer of tasks by June 2017. It also stated that certain locations could be considered as suitable for handing over to the Government and the United Nations country team to facilitate the Mission's phased and gradual withdrawal.

60. In accordance with the Secretary-General's letter of 28 October 2016 (S/2016/915), an integrated team, comprising representatives from the United Nations and the African Union with expertise in political, military, police, security, humanitarian, development, human rights, gender and support issues, arrived in Khartoum on 5 March 2017 to commence the strategic review. The team considered, inter alia, opportunities for the right-sizing of UNAMID. The joint African Union-United Nations report on the strategic review will be submitted to the African Union Peace and Security Council and the Security Council by early May 2017.

VIII. Financial aspects

61. The General Assembly, by its resolution 70/284, appropriated the amount of $1,039.6 million for the maintenance of UNAMID for the period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017.

62. As at 23 February 2017, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNAMID amounted to $100.1 million. Total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to $1,837.6 million.

63. Reimbursement of troop and formed police costs has been made for the period up to 31 October 2016, while reimbursement of the costs of contingent-owned equipment has been made for the period up to 30 September 2016, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

IX. Observations

64. The situation in Darfur has evolved. The Government and rebel groups are no longer engaged in active combat, and the presence of the rebel groups has diminished, except in the area of the Jebel Marra. Consequently, the security and humanitarian situations have improved in most of Darfur. Nevertheless, internally displaced persons still face violent attacks that preclude their safe, voluntary and dignified return. Such attacks are perpetrated by Government forces, armed militias or criminal elements, both inside their camps and when they step out to engage in life-sustaining activities, such as farming or water collection. Women and children remain particularly vulnerable, and crimes against them continue to occur daily. Lands, farms and properties that they once called home have been occupied by others, and armed clashes over these resources continue to claim the lives of the people in Darfur.

65. The current lull in armed conflict must be sustained, so that violence against civilians ceases, and conditions emerge for the voluntary and safe return of internally displaced persons and communities, so that they can embark on a sustainable path to reconciliation and recovery. I welcome the continuation of unilateral ceasefires by the Government of the Sudan and the non-signatory movements to the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, and I urge them to resume direct talks with a view to achieving a formal agreement on the cessation of hostilities and humanitarian access and to move expeditiously towards political negotiations. These steps will create confidence, internally and externally, that the conflict in Darfur may end through an uncontested, inclusive and participatory process. I once again call on the leadership of SLA/Abdul Wahid faction to demonstrate its commitment towards the peaceful solution of the conflict by joining the talks without preconditions or further delay. I call on the two SLA/Abdul Wahid groups who signed separate agreements with the Government to abide by their terms, cease any armed activities and ensure that peace dividends are extended to all. Otherwise, it is the people of Darfur who will continue to suffer.

66. While intercommunal rivalry may predate the outbreak of the rebellion and counter-insurgency operation in 2003, its ferocity as a result of the armed conflict continues to plague Darfur today. The proliferation of heavy weapons and small arms, the mobilization of tribes for fighting and the erosion of social cohesion and authority at the community level during the 14 years of the conflict has magnified the level of violence over access to livelihood sources. Internal displacement caused by the conflict has also complicated local dynamics, as in the case of Sortony, North Darfur. Notwithstanding the efforts made by local governments to promote reconciliation, the recurrence of intercommunal clashes cannot be resolved in the absence of an inclusive peace process and its conclusion, which involves consensus on equitable access to and sustainable management of land and other natural resources, the rule of law and the disbanding of armed militias. I call on the Government and all stakeholders to cooperate with UNAMID and the United Nations country team in continuing to work towards the prevention and mitigation of intercommunal conflict, taking specific measures to address its root causes, which will ultimately benefit members of all communities in Darfur as they seek to return to peace.

67. The National Dialogue process provided a platform for the Sudan to identify remedies to its internal political challenges. I call on the Government and the opposition parties to continue working together to implement its recommendations in a way that ensures the ownership of the process and its outcome by the wider public, including civil society groups. The reciprocal decisions made by the Government and the SPLM-North to release their respective prisoners of war were a positive development that can foster a conducive environment for dialogue, and I look forward to the resumption of talks facilitated by the African Union High-level Implementation Panel.

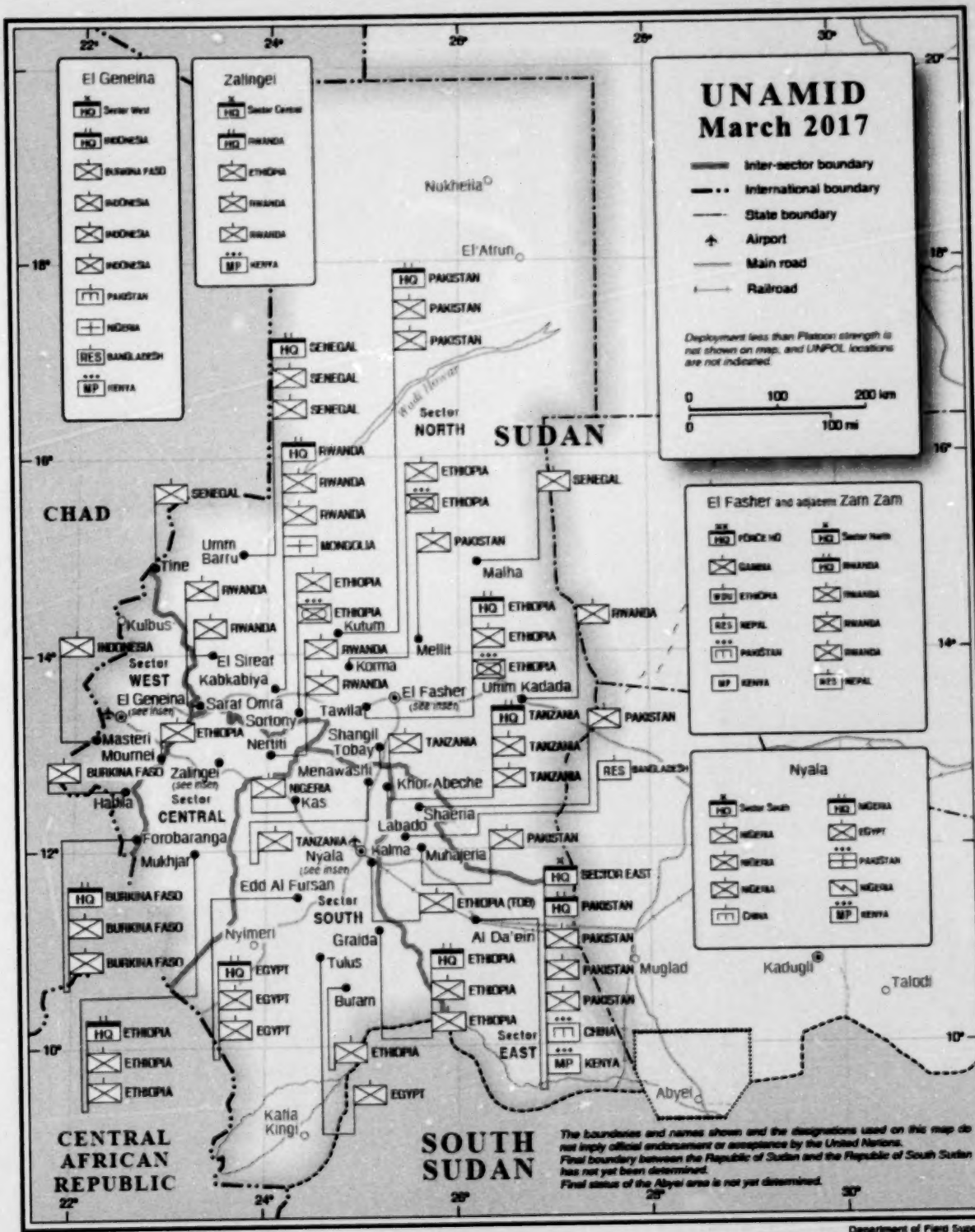
68. The Doha Document for Peace in Darfur articulated ways to address the causes and consequences of the conflict, including critical issues relating to land, the disarmament of militias, reconciliation and accountability and the return of internally displaced persons. In this regard, I note with encouragement the establishment of new arrangements under the Presidency for taking forward the implementation of outstanding issues of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. It will be important, in order to ensure the completion of the remaining tasks, that concrete plans are developed and executed in a timely and inclusive manner with the participation of the people of Darfur. UNAMID remains committed to support such efforts, together with the United Nations country team.

69. With over 2.6 million people still displaced, and violence against civilians taking place throughout Darfur, the protection of civilians continues to be the priority of UNAMID. I am disturbed by the persistent violations and abuses of human rights committed against civilians, in particular internally displaced persons, women and children, in Darfur. Since the main source of insecurity or crime is Government forces and their affiliated militias, ending such a pattern of violence requires a wider reform process that brings accountability to armed personnel and transforms the machinery developed for counter-insurgency. I count on the commitment of the Government to prevent any acts of violence by its security personnel against civilians, and to take punitive measures for those who defy it. The rule of law must be strengthened to address acts of violence committed by armed militias and criminal groups. In this connection, I reiterate my call upon the Government to provide unhindered access to UNAMID and its humanitarian and human rights partners to reach areas of concern, including the camps for internally displaced persons and localities affected by armed clashes. Clearance granted to parts of the Jebel Marra that remained inaccessible for the past several years is a positive deployment, and I urge the Government to continue extending access, including for other parts of that region.

70. I also welcome progress made in the processing of visas and the release of food ration containers. I am however concerned about continued delays in the clearance of containers holding essential equipment and supplies for UNAMID in Port Sudan and Khartoum. I urge the Government, in line with its obligations under the status-of-forces agreement, to take urgent steps to remove all remaining restrictions on UNAMID operations, particularly those pending requests that have experienced lengthy delays.

71. The United Nations remains committed to developing the exit strategy of UNAMID, in accordance with the decisions of the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. Similarly, UNAMID continues its efforts for the gradual transfer of tasks to the United Nations country team on the basis of comparative advantage and complementarity. However, the continued lack of resources for the United Nations country team to expand its presence and operations in Darfur poses a significant challenge to the process of handing over mandated tasks. I count on the support of donor countries to fill gaps in critical areas, such as gender and rule of law, while UNAMID continues to work with the country team and civil society partners to ensure the sustainability of support provided through the peacekeeping mission.

72. In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to the former Joint Special Representative/Joint Chief Mediator, Martin Ihoeghian Uhomoibhi, for his work in support of peace in Darfur during his one-year service at UNAMID. In the same vein, I appreciate the efforts of the Acting Joint Special Representative/Joint Chief Mediator, Jeremiah Nyamane Kingsley Mamabolo, as well as the leadership and all the personnel of UNAMID, the United Nations country team and humanitarian partners, who continue to work tirelessly towards the pursuit of sustainable peace in Darfur, often under very difficult conditions. I also commend my Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan, Nicholas Haysom, and former Presidents Thabo Mbeki and Abdulsalami Abubakar of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel for their steadfast commitment to sustainable peace and stability in the Sudan.



Map No. 4327 Rev. 27 UNITED NATIONS
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Department of Field Support
Geospatial Information Section (formerly Cartographic Section)

United Nations A/ES-10/747–S/2017/251

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Security Council

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General Assembly
Tenth emergency special session
Agenda item 5
Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-second year

Identical letters dated 23 March 2017 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I write to you in follow-up to our numerous previous letters regarding the illegal policies of and constant provocations and incitement by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Over the past couple of months, and after the adoption of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), Israel's reckless actions have continued and been deliberately escalated, exacerbating tensions and risking the further destabilization of the fragile situation on the ground.

In fact, since the adoption of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), the Israeli Government has been adamant, in word and deed, to send a message to the international community that it has no intention of abiding by the resolution or, for that matter, the provisions of international law in its entirety. While the resolution calls upon both parties to act on the basis of international law, including international humanitarian law, and their previous agreements and obligations, to observe calm and restraint and to refrain from provocative actions, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric, the occupying Power continues to do the complete opposite. It is blatantly acting in contempt of the Security Council, in violation of resolution 2334 (2016) and the principles of international law enshrined therein, and taking us further away from peace and closer to the brink of an all-out confrontation.

On all fronts the situation is deteriorating and of serious concern. In addition to Israel's unabated illegal settlement colonization and oppression of the Palestinian civilian population in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Israel's aggressions and illegal policies and practices vis-à-vis the Gaza Strip have many analysts warning that Israel could be leading up to a wide-scale military offensive.

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As we near the shameful 10-year mark of Israel's blockade on Gaza, we must draw the international community's urgent attention to the grave plight of the nearly 2 million Palestinian civilians there, who are being imprisoned by this illegal and inhumane siege. Despite the repeated calls to end the blockade, which constitutes collective punishment prohibited under international law, Israel persists with its blockade and the situation on the ground continues to worsen. Moreover, the occupying Power continues to unleash its wrath against the civilian population there. Just this past Wednesday, 22 March 2017, Israeli occupying forces launched a wave of attacks on Gaza, killing Yousef Shaaban Abu Athra (age, 15), in eastern Rafah. The death of 15-year-old Yousef by artillery fire marked the fourth killing of a Palestinian in Gaza since the start of 2017.

In addition to the killing of Yousef and the injury of many others, Israel's air strikes also damaged Gaza's already tenuous electricity infrastructure, when missiles launched against the Shujaaiya neighbourhood of Gaza City cut off the electricity supply in the area. Electricity shortages continue to severely impact the provision of essential services, including access to health care, while also undermining livelihoods in an already grim political and socioeconomic environment and affecting the basics of everyday civilian life.

In a separate incident in southern Gaza on 22 March 2017, four armoured Israeli bulldozers, escorted by several military vehicles, raided al-Qarrara in the northern part of Khan Yunis. Israeli forces indiscriminately opened fire on Palestinian farmers tending to their land there, causing injury to the farmers and damage to their land.

We call upon the international community to demand that the occupying Power cease its military aggression against Gaza and our people living there and to uphold its obligations to protect civilians and ensure respect for the rules of international law. Moreover, we continue to reiterate our call to end the illegal and morally corrupt blockade.

On the issue of illegal settlements, Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) reaffirmed that the establishment of settlements in the West Bank is a "flagrant violation under international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace". However, less than a month after the resolution's adoption, Israel declared that it would move ahead with plans for roughly 6,000 more illegal settlement units in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. In contempt of the will of the international community, and in blatant rejection of the two-State solution, Israel is obviously entrenching its colonization and occupation of the Palestinian land, in grave breach of international humanitarian law, international criminal law and resolutions of the Security Council with total impunity.

At the same time, the occupying Power has intensified its illegal practice of demolitions of Palestinian homes. According to the United Nations, as of late January 2017, a total of 105 demolitions had already been recorded in so-called "Area C" and 14 in East Jerusalem, displacing hundreds more civilians. On 19 February alone, Israeli police issued orders to demolish 40 Palestinian-owned houses in the area of Khan al-Ahmar, north-east of the city of East Jerusalem, continuing the pressure and aggression against our Bedouin community. It should be recalled that, in 2016, Israeli demolitions of Palestinian homes and properties

totalled 1,093, which is the largest figure recorded since the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs began collecting data in 2009.

Moreover, it has been reported that, next week, right-wing Israeli ministers are expected to push forward a bill in the Knesset that aims at the annexation of the illegal Israeli settlement of "Maale Adumim". We reiterate that which we stressed in our letter of 7 February 2017 (A/ES-10/743-S/2017/115) that this provocative Israeli measure constitutes a blatant attempt to "legalize" a crime. It aims at reinforcing Israel's illegal settlement enterprise and the theft of our land, whether by Israeli settlers or by the Government and its occupying forces. In this regard, we reiterate once more that colonization is colonization, no matter how it is packaged or presented, and it is strictly prohibited, and that no amount of legal manipulation by Israel can evade these unequivocal prohibitions.

As Israeli settlement activities continue, so, too, do settler violence and terror. Palestinian civilians, including women, children and elderly persons, continue to be attacked and even killed by Israeli settlers, including several using cars as weapons to kill Palestinians. This was the case with Husni Darraj (age, 58), who died after being run over by an Israeli settler on route 443, which is just one of the 60 kilometres of roads in the West Bank that Palestinians are barred from using and is dedicated exclusively for use by Israelis.

The above-mentioned facts make the recent report by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, *Israeli Practices towards the Palestinian People and the Question of Apartheid*, even more relevant and timely. It concluded, among other things, that, based on scholarly inquiry and overwhelming evidence, Israel has imposed a regime of apartheid on the Palestinian people as a whole, wherever they may be, affecting Palestinians in Israel itself, in the territory occupied in 1967 and in the diaspora.

At the same time, Israel, the occupying Power, continues its arrest and detention raids throughout the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Palestinian civilians are being detained daily, with young men and boys especially targeted by the occupying forces, who routinely assault, humiliate and severely abuse, including torture, Palestinian civilians arbitrarily arrested or detained. We call for this illegal practice to end and for Israel to release the approximately 7,000 Palestinian prisoners whom it holds captive in its prisons and detention centres in contravention of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The above-mentioned incidents are only a few examples of the daily and constant brutality meted out by Israel, the occupying Power, against our people. The countless other violations that have taken place are nearly impossible to document in their entirety. In the light of this totally unlawful and unacceptable situation, we call once again for serious efforts to be undertaken by the international community, particularly the Security Council, to implement resolution 2334 (2016) and all other relevant United Nations resolutions towards relieving the plight of the Palestinian people under this illegal 50-year military occupation.

In this regard, we await the first report by the Secretary-General regarding the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016). The Palestinian leadership feels very strongly that it is beyond urgent that all provisions of this resolution be immediately upheld and implementation be seriously pursued in the face of such brazen

violations and blatant disrespect for the Security Council's authority and legislation. The Council's decisions must be respected by every State, without exception, including by Israel. The Council's credibility is at stake and so, too, are the prospects for peace. If resolution 2334 (2016) is permitted to be dismissed by Israel without fear of accountability, then the prospect of a peaceful future for the Palestinian and Israeli peoples will continue to remain an illusion, with all of the attendant negative consequences. We cannot afford for this to be the reality and urge respect for the resolution and respect for the Charter of our organization, the keys to peace.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 606 previous letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 7 February 2017 (A/ES-10/743-S/2017/115), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations

United Nations S/2017/252*

Security Council

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Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Colombia

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2261 (2016), by which the Council established the United Nations Mission in Colombia and requested that I report to the Council on the implementation of the mandate of the Mission every 90 days after the start of monitoring and verification activities. The report covers the activities of the Mission and related developments from 24 December 2016 to 24 March 2017.

II. Major developments

2. The reporting period witnessed significant developments in the implementation process, including the movement of approximately 6,900 members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP) to 26 local agreed zones and points. The laying down of arms process has started in these areas, and the process of reintegration of FARC-EP combatants should begin soon. This is a major step towards the consolidation of the ceasefire, the reintegration of the members of FARC-EP into civilian life and the transformation of the armed group into a political party. Notwithstanding delays in implementation overall, the parties have reiterated their determination to complete the process of the laying down of arms by the end of the 180-day timeline established in the peace agreement, together with the advance of key measures regarding legal, security and socioeconomic matters that are critical to the success of reintegration and the consolidation of peace beyond the phase of the laying down of arms.

Legislative and institutional implementation of the peace agreement

Key legislation

3. The amnesty law was passed on 30 December 2016 under fast-track legislative procedures for peace implementation. It is a critical piece of legislation: it provides de jure amnesty for FARC-EP members accused of or sentenced for political crimes

* Reissued for technical reasons on 28 March 2017.

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(such as rebellion, sedition, conspiracy and connected crimes). It also provides for conditional release or parole for imprisoned members of FARC-EP who have served five years or more of their prison sentences for crimes that do not fall under the amnesty provisions, upon their signing a commitment to become subject to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace in Colombia. In addition, the law provides that FARC-EP members sentenced for crimes that are not subject to amnesty and who have not yet served five years of their sentences will be transferred to alternative facilities located in some of the zones where FARC-EP has regrouped. Such facilities are in the process of being established and will be certified as adequate by the tripartite Monitoring and Verification Mechanism before FARC-EP members are transferred to them.

4. The amnesty law further provides for different modalities that will apply to members of the public security forces who are accused of or prosecuted or sentenced for crimes associated or in connection with the armed conflict with FARC-EP.

5. Throughout the reporting period, concerns were expressed about the slow pace of implementation of the amnesty law. On 17 February, the Government issued a decree aimed at expediting the application of the law. However, other actors, including within the judiciary branch, have expressed their own misgivings about the practical implementation of the law. At the time of writing the present report, only 72 FARC-EP members have benefited from the provisions of the amnesty law. At least some 1,000 requests under the amnesty law are currently being processed. In addition, since 15 December 177 FARC-EP members have been freed as a result of pardons issued by the President of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, rather than the amnesty law.

6. On 19 December 2016, the Government submitted to Congress, under fast-track legislative procedures, a draft law with constitutional scope to establish the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparations and Non-repetition, provided for in the peace agreement. This includes the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, consisting of a distinct judicial system and procedures under which crimes committed during the armed conflict and the rights of victims will be addressed.

7. The draft legislation was the subject of protracted debates in Congress, owing in part to the fact that the Special Jurisdiction for Peace was at the centre of concerns expressed by the groups that supported the "no" vote during the plebiscite of 2 October 2016. The debates resulted in many amendments to the legislation, notably with regard to the armed forces and civilian third parties that may have been involved in the conflict. The law on the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparations and Non-repetition was adopted by Congress in mid-March, with those amendments. The Constitutional Court will subsequently review it. Congress is now expected to consider laws regulating this transitional justice system.

8. On 26 January, my Special Representative confirmed the designation, endorsed by the two parties, of Néstor Correa as the temporary Executive Director of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. On 27 January, I designated Diego García Sayán to be part of the selection committee tasked with choosing magistrates and other officials for the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparations and Non-repetition over the coming months. All other designating entities (the Criminal Chamber of the Supreme Court of Colombia, the International Center for Transitional Justice, the Standing Committee of the State University System in Colombia and the President of

the European Court of Human Rights) had completed their appointments by 14 February. The members of the Committee met in Bogotá on 7 March.

9. On 1 February, the Government presented to Congress a draft law of constitutional scope on the political reintegration of FARC-EP. It concerns financing, political guarantees and minimum representation during the next two legislative election cycles (2018 and 2022). On 14 February, Congress adopted a law regulating the participation in congressional debates on peace-related legislation of six observers on behalf of FARC-EP.

10. Other peace-related legislation was also introduced during the reporting period, such as legislation with constitutional scope aimed at ensuring that State institutions implement in good faith the content of the peace agreement, legislation on norms applicable to State agents in the context of the finalization of the armed conflict and a law on the status of the opposition.

11. On 24 March, the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations delivered to me the peace agreement signed on 24 November, which, in accordance with the agreement, I will transmit to the Security Council for its subsequent circulation as a document of the Council.

Key implementation bodies

12. On 3 February, President Santos announced the formation of a post-conflict cabinet comprising the Ministers of the Interior, Finance, Health, Agriculture, Mines, Energy and Labour and the Minister Counsellor for Post-Conflict. The cabinet is tasked to oversee the Government efforts of implementation of the peace agreement and achieve effective linkages between the Government and State institutions responsible for implementing post-conflict programmes and projects. It has focused initially on humanitarian demining, illicit crop substitution and regional development.

Overall implementation

13. The body responsible for overall supervision of peace implementation, the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement, was created on 2 December 2016. The Commission is composed of three Government officials, including the High Commissioner for Peace, the Minister of the Interior and the Minister Counsellor for Post-Conflict, as well as three high-level members of FARC-EP — Iván Márquez, Victoria Sandino and Jesús Santrich. During the reporting period, the Commission focused, among other things, on progress in the zones and points, passing and implementing the amnesty law and other peace legislation, reaching agreement on crop substitution and designing development programmes in rural areas.

Electoral matters

14. On 17 January, President Santos established the special electoral mission envisaged in the political participation chapter of the peace agreement, in order to enhance autonomy and independence in the organization of elections, and requested it to present its recommendations as soon as possible.

Reintegration

15. A national reintegration council was formally established on 2 December 2016, bringing together Government officials and representatives of FARC-EP to address the political and socioeconomic reintegration of FARC-EP members. The council has discussed a workplan and is considering the modalities for FARC-EP reincorporation into civilian life. During the reporting period, it focused its attention on the situation of children in the ranks of FARC-EP.

16. On 26 January, the national reintegration council activated the protocol on the separation of children upon entry of FARC-EP forces into zones and points, and adopted guidelines for a special reintegration programme for children separated from FARC-EP. The issuance of those procedures followed a period of increasingly vocal appeals from the Government and civil society for FARC-EP to comply with the commitments it had made on 15 May 2016 to separate children from its ranks. As decided by the council, children arriving with FARC-EP to the zones and points are transported by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), accompanied by two civil society representatives, to transitional accommodations, where the United Nations Children's Fund, with the support of the International Organization for Migration and in collaboration with the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Human Rights, initiates the restitution of their rights. The implementation of the programme began on 3 March. As agreed by the parties, ICRC is responsible for reporting on this issue. ICRC reported on the reception of the first groups of children on 4, 10 and 15 March.

Security guarantees

17. On 3 February, President Santos signed a decree setting up the national commission on security guarantees to design and monitor public and criminal policy related to the dismantlement of criminal organizations. The commission is chaired by President Santos and includes the Ministers of the Interior, Defence and Justice, the Attorney-General, the Ombudsman, the Inspector General and the Director of a dedicated special unit of the Office of the Attorney-General. It also includes representatives of human rights non-governmental organizations and experts. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Colombia was invited to participate. On 23 February, President Santos formally established the commission in Cauca department, one of the departments most affected by violence. This body seeks to address the actions of groups responsible for homicides and/or massacres targeting individuals involved in the implementation of the agreements and the construction of peace. This includes organizations termed as successors of former paramilitary groups and their support networks. As noted in paragraph 24 of the present report, the persistence of attacks against community leaders and human rights defenders in conflict-affected areas has been a prominent source of concern, including owing to its implications with regard to the upcoming reintegration of FARC-EP.

Participation

18. On 31 January, the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification Commission established a high-level consultative entity to ensure coordination between the parties and civil society organizations representing ethnic groups. In addition, a

total of six women's organizations will participate in discussions with the Commission, in order to guarantee that a gender approach is maintained in the implementation of the peace agreement.

Political context

19. Implementation of the peace agreement has been unfolding in a political environment increasingly marked by the next general elections, which will take place in May 2018. All Government officials who intend to participate in next year's electoral contest are expected to resign from their positions. The current Vice-President will be succeeded by General Oscar Naranjo, the former Director of the National Police and one of the Government's plenipotentiary negotiators in the Havana peace talks.

20. In mid-January, at a meeting of its Central Command held in the Llanos of the Yarí region of Meta department, FARC-EP leadership reaffirmed its commitment to transform into a political party and stated its intention to hold a "foundational congress" at the end of May. FARC-EP leader Rodrigo Londoño (also known as Timoleón Jímenez or Timochenko) also indicated that the group did not intend to field a presidential candidate in the 2018 election, but rather it aimed to promote national consensus around a candidate guaranteeing continuity in the implementation of the peace agreement.

21. During the reporting period, President Santos reiterated his call for an inclusive political compact on the implementation of the peace agreement. However, leaders of political parties who opposed the terms of the peace agreement during the plebiscite of 2 October 2016 have expressed their intention to review aspects of the agreement if elected to office in 2018.

Security context

22. Confirming the commitment of the Government and FARC-EP to the definitive end to their conflict, the bilateral ceasefire and cessation of hostilities between the Government and FARC-EP held and no casualties were registered during the reporting period.

23. At the same time, concern continued to be expressed over the presence and actions of non-State armed groups, including in areas of former deployment of FARC-EP. These include the National Liberation Army (ELN) guerrilla group, successors of former paramilitary groups such as Clan del Golfo, Popular Liberation Army (EPL) and other groups linked to organized crime, and in particular a variety of groups operating at the local level that vie for the control of illegal mining, drugs and extortion activities.

24. Civil society organizations have denounced the presence of these non-State armed groups, which they hold responsible for a number of attacks and acts of intimidation against communities and their leaders. Threatening leaflets have been circulating in several departments, including close to zones and points where FARC-EP are concentrated, calling for the assassination of community leaders and human rights defenders. There has been particular concern over attacks against and intimidation of community leaders and human rights defenders. The Ombudsman has called for improvement in protection measures. OHCHR has to date verified 60 cases of killings of human rights defenders in 2016. Civil society organizations have

reported higher figures that include the killing of a wider category of community leaders. According to all sources, this worrisome trend has continued in the first months of 2017.

25. The Government has taken measures aimed at preventing other armed groups from developing a foothold in zones vacated by FARC-EP, focused initially on 160 municipalities. At the inauguration of the commission on security guarantees on 23 February, President Santos strongly condemned all attacks against community leaders, and committed in particular not to allow the repetition of such tragedies as those that befell Unión Patriótica, the party established by FARC-EP, whose membership was decimated in the 1980s and 1990s. By virtue of its high-level and multidimensional composition, the commission would appear to be ideally positioned to ensure that all of the responsible State entities work effectively together to combat violence and to ensure cooperation with civil society. This is not a short-term endeavour, but it is hoped that the work of the commission will soon have an impact on reducing levels of violence, in particular in conflict areas.

26. An additional concern has been the desertion of a number of FARC-EP members, although the phenomenon appears limited in scope. Figures vary in the range of 2 to 5 per cent of combatants, primarily in areas of the south-east and the Pacific coast. There have been frequent reports that FARC-EP members are being enticed to desert, in particular by criminal organizations involved in drug trafficking.

27. In a long hoped-for development, the formal phase of peace talks between the Government of Colombia and ELN, the country's second largest guerrilla group, began in Quito on 7 February, following a number of postponements. The beginning of the talks followed the release by ELN on 2 February of a hostage held since early 2016. However, violence resulting from the ongoing conflict between ELN and the Government of Colombia persisted, as illustrated by the attack claimed by ELN on 19 February, when a bomb in Bogotá killed 1 policeman and injured 26 persons, mostly policemen.

III. Mission tasks

28. The Mission serves as coordinator of the tripartite Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, which worked intensely during the reporting period. The Government, FARC-EP and the Mission have been collaborating more effectively at the national, regional and local levels. In its coordination role, the Mission has been instrumental in facilitating consensus on the Mechanism's monitoring and verification activities. The Mechanism demonstrated its value through its successful coordination and accompaniment of the movements of FARC-EP members to zones and points, the verification of compliance with protocols, the investigation of incidents and the recommendation of remedial action when appropriate. Some matters relating to the verification of the ceasefire and the process of the laying down of arms were affected by the slow pace of construction of FARC-EP camps. Those were referred to the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification Commission, given the need for political-level decisions. Recent discrepancies in the parties' views with respect to the state of progress in the preparation of zones and FARC-EP camps pointed to the need to reinforce joint assessments carried out within the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism.

Ceasefire and cessation of hostilities

Monitoring of movements

29. According to the timeline established in the peace agreement, movement of FARC-EP to the zones and points was to be achieved by the end of December, 30 days after the entry into force of the agreement. However, on 28 December, taking into account the status of the zones and points, the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification Commission agreed that FARC-EP would remain in temporary pre-grouping points near those areas, and that those FARC-EP units in locations distant from zones and points would continue their movement toward them.

30. On 5 January, President Santos, during a visit to the local temporary site in Mesetas (Meta department), expressed the commitment of the Government to overcoming delays in the construction of FARC-EP camps. Subsequently, an accelerated effort to address logistical shortcomings was made by the Government, in coordination with FARC-EP and the Mission. It was agreed that the Government would take responsibility for camp access and ground preparation, the provision of water, power and sanitation and the construction of common areas. The camps' living areas were to be built by members of FARC-EP with the material provided by the Government.

31. On 17 January, the Government and the leadership of FARC-EP agreed that, regardless of the status of camp construction, movement of FARC-EP units to the zones would be completed by the end of January.

32. From 28 January to 18 February, the tripartite Monitoring and Verification Mechanism undertook a major operation to accompany and monitor the final movement of FARC-EP guerrillas to zones and points.

33. An operations centre to plan and monitor the movements was established at the headquarters of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism in Bogotá. The centre brought together the Mechanism and office of the High Commissioner for Peace, as well as military and police forces, including the Strategic Transition Command and the Police Unit for Peacebuilding. Such an integrated structure was required to provide the logistical support and security to the movements.

34. Overall, 36 movements toward the zones and points were carried out in 14 departments. That involved compliance with ceasefire regulations, the establishment of routes for movements, effective coordination and communication and security measures for the transport of arms. The Monitoring and Verification Mechanism monitored, coordinated and accompanied FARC-EP movements, while the Government supplied logistics, security and means of transport.

35. By 18 February, some 6,900 members of FARC-EP had gathered in the 26 zones and points. Of that number, approximately 1,179 were women, many of them pregnant or with young children. Remarkably, that complex movement of thousands of armed members of FARC-EP was carried out with hardly an incident.

36. The parties agreed on 17 January that FARC-EP militia members would enter zones and points temporarily to undergo procedures for their reintegration into civilian life. Most militia members, however, are not expected to remain in zones and points.

Investigation of incidents

37. During the reporting period, the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism received 81 requests for the investigation of incidents. Of those, 19 were found to be irrelevant to the mandate of the Mechanism, while 14 could not be verified. During the reporting period, the Mechanism verified seven compliance failures, eight minor violations and two serious violations of the ceasefire and cessation of hostilities protocols. A serious violation took place on 10 January, near San Vicente del Caguán (Caquetá department), when FARC-EP forces attacked a group of deserters, causing the death of one. Investigations are also ongoing into a case of alleged sexual abuse of a girl by a member of the Colombian armed forces.

38. The most frequent incidents concerned the exit of FARC-EP members from camps without proper coordination with the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, the entry of Colombian public security forces to areas near FARC-EP camps and the conduct of alleged political proselytism by FARC-EP members during movements outside of zones and points.

39. The Monitoring and Verification Mechanism conducted routine activities such as accompanying FARC-EP in movements other than those to zones and points, monitoring the security layout for the protection of FARC-EP, conducting technical visits to zones and points, accompanying high-level visits to the Mechanism's local headquarters, including by foreign Government representatives, monitoring temporary pre-grouping points and monitoring and assisting in medical evacuations.

40. Social tensions and the mobilization of communities have in some cases affected the work of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism. The movement of FARC-EP forces to Caño Indio (Norte de Santander department) was interrupted from 9 to 14 February, owing to protests by local communities in La Gabarra voicing concern about the security situation in the region and the alleged presence of armed groups. In La Variante, Tumaco (Nariño department), starting on 21 February members of the community demonstrated intermittently in front of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism local site, affecting its work. Demonstrations and roadblocks near the zone of El Carrizal, Remedios (Antioquia department) have impeded access to the Mechanism local headquarters, with local communities protesting recent public security operations against illegal mining. Similarly, in Filipinas, Arauquita (Arauca department) local farmers blocked roads, claiming they had been damaged by efforts to prepare the zone of Filipinas.

Monitoring of the provision of logistics

41. Monitoring and verification of logistical support activities conducted by the Government to address the needs of FARC-EP members resumed. As noted in my previous report, FARC-EP had decided to suspend Government-provided supplies, arguing that food had been delivered in poor condition and that the authorities were not complying with the commitment to use local suppliers. On 17 January, the parties decided to resume Government supplies and asked that their quality and local origin be monitored by the Mechanism.

42. A marked improvement in compliance with commitments and the quality of supplies was observed as the Mechanism offered recommendations to address shortcomings. Nonetheless, the Mechanism found a number of deficiencies that

remain to be addressed. These include discrepancies between the articles requested and provided and the provision of an insufficient quantity of certain goods, the insufficient supply of infant formula and other goods for infants, the need for equipment to ensure refrigeration of perishable goods in some areas and the need to guarantee local supplies in accordance with agreements reached by the parties.

43. On 25 January, the Colombian Minister of Health indicated that 6,247 members of FARC-EP had been registered with the health system. In addition, the Government provided medical brigades to offer assistance in temporary pre-grouping points and urgent medical treatment. During the movements toward zones and points, medical assistance was provided to 22 persons, including 11 pregnant women, 5 children and 6 adults.

44. Despite improvements made, there is an urgent need to establish field clinics in the zones. The presence of more than 60 pregnant and nursing FARC-EP members underscores the importance of medical attention, and FARC-EP has voiced complaints regarding the unavailability of such care. The clinics are also intended to provide medical services to local communities and personnel of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism. According to the Government, the procurement process is ongoing. In the meantime, the Government has deployed "medical brigades", consisting of medical personnel who remain in a specific area for a few days, to the zones and points, in order to ensure that health care is provided until the clinics are established. A number of civil society initiatives have sought to support the construction of FARC-EP camps and improve conditions therein, including providing assistance to pregnant and nursing FARC-EP members.

45. The Mechanism has been monitoring the status of completion of FARC-EP camps in the zones and points, and reported its latest findings in its report of 14 March. It has measured progress made in percentage terms to provide a general idea of the preparation process. Phase I, comprising identification and renting of land, is almost completed, with renting of additional land for a second camp in one of the zones still pending. Phase II includes ground preparation, the provision of water, power and sanitation and the construction of common areas. Approximately 17 zones were between 10 per cent and 50 per cent ready and 9 were over 50 per cent ready. Phase III includes the delivery of material and the building of accommodation. Approximately 25 zones were between 10 per cent and 50 per cent completed, and 1 was more than 50 per cent completed.

Liaison and outreach

46. The Monitoring and Verification Mechanism has continued holding regular meetings with civil society organizations, including women's groups, to share information on the situation in areas where zones and points are located and to listen to community concerns regarding the process. Meetings were also held with departmental and local level authorities. The Mechanism established a communications strategy implemented from Bogotá, through its eight regional offices and its presence at the local level. Specific efforts have been directed towards highlighting the work of women as part of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism. The Mechanism, in collaboration with the United Nations Mission, has trained over 140 journalists in one national, two regional and one local workshop on

communications to enhance understanding of the ceasefire and cessation of hostilities and the process of the laying down of arms.

47. On 16 March, the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism initiated workshops at its regional offices with the aim of addressing, among other issues, potential gender concerns that may arise in the context of monitoring activities, such as reports of gender-based violence. The workshops will include the participation of personnel based in local sites from the three components of the Mechanism.

Laying down of arms

48. A major milestone was achieved with the beginning of the process of the laying down of arms on 1 March, when the Mission initiated the registration of arms in the FARC-EP camps. On 11 March, the Mission received the arms of the 140 FARC-EP members who are part of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, to be followed, in short order, by the arms of FARC-EP members who have been designated to promote peace-related activities. In addition, the Mission initiated, in coordination with FARC-EP, planning for the verification of the destruction of unstable FARC-EP armament located in caches.

49. While those steps represent a tangible start to the process of the laying down of arms, the timeline set out in the peace agreement specified that by 1 March (D+90) FARC-EP was to have delivered 30 per cent of its members' arms to the Mission, followed by the storing of remaining arms in two subsequent tranches. FARC-EP has stressed its readiness to take those steps as greater progress is made in parallel with regard to the logistics of the zones and the implementation of specific commitments that are the responsibility of the Government, including the legal and security guarantees for FARC-EP members and the implementation of plans for socioeconomic reintegration as the process of the laying down of arms comes to a conclusion. Notwithstanding this somewhat more complex dynamic of interlocking commitments, which was the subject of an exchange of letters and subsequent discussion between my Special Representative and the parties, both the Government and FARC-EP have reaffirmed their commitment to completing the process of the laying down of arms within the 180-day time frame established in the peace agreement.

50. The status of camp construction has influenced the initiation of laying down of arms activities. Under the terms of the peace agreement, the laying down of arms was to take place at designated United Nations sites located inside FARC-EP camps within the zones and points. As those camps are not expected to be completed until the end of March or possibly later, FARC-EP members find themselves in temporary camps that are in close proximity but may not coincide with the exact location of the final camps.

51. Pending the completion of the designated United Nations sites within the final FARC-EP camps, the Mission has adopted measures to enable the laying down of arms to begin in the temporary FARC-EP camps. Observers deployed to FARC-EP temporary camps have set up rudimentary team sites and stored weapons in easily transportable reinforced metallic storage boxes, capable of holding up to 100 small arms each. The boxes are monitored through the constant presence of at least two United Nations observers. All permanent designated United Nations sites, including larger containers to store arms, are expected to be ready in the coming weeks.

52. According to the timeline established by the peace agreement, unstable explosive material contained in weapons caches should have been destroyed by 30 January (D+60). This ambitious timeline could not be observed owing to delays in the movement of FARC-EP members to zones and points. On 28 February, FARC-EP agreed to inform the United Nations of the location of said caches, and the Mission is in the process of deploying 60 observers to verify the extraction of arms contained in weapons caches, as well as the destruction of unstable explosive material, in coordination with FARC-EP. In early January, the Mission verified the location and transport of a light weapons cache in Caloto to Monte Redondo, Corinto (Cauca department). The upcoming monitoring and observation of the destruction of weapons caches will be a major undertaking, owing in particular to the remoteness and difficulty of access of most caches.

53. The United Nations Department of Safety and Security in Bogotá and the security officers at the regional and local levels are involved in the planning of operations related to the laying down of arms and the destruction of unstable FARC-EP armaments located in caches. It was agreed that, following the security risk management assessment of the overall process of laying down of arms, specific security risk management assessments will be prepared for each local operation of destruction of unstable armament and explosives.

Substantive coordination functions

54. The substantive coordination staff of the Mission continued to engage with national, departmental and local authorities and civil society organizations to exchange information on the peace process and the implementation of the mandate of the Mission.

55. At the national level, the Mission holds regular meetings with the diplomatic community, political leaders, civil society organizations, churches, the human rights community, indigenous organizations, women associations and platforms of non-governmental groups. Those encounters allowed the Mission to engage with key stakeholders and brief on the implementation of its mandate. They also provided an opportunity to collect perspectives on challenges and potential risks facing the peace process, particularly the ceasefire and the laying down of arms. Given the broad array of active and influential social and political actors in Colombian society, such exchanges are essential to the work, acceptance and broad legitimacy of the Mission; they also contribute to inform public opinion on the dynamics of the process. Such interactions are particularly important, considering the reservations of some sectors of the public regarding the peace process. Regular meetings with civil society platforms bringing together women's organizations and ethnic groups have brought to the light their desire to participate and be consulted throughout the process of implementation of the peace agreement. Human rights groups have highlighted the aforementioned security situation and threats facing community leaders and human rights defenders.

56. A productive relationship continues with the United Nations country team at all levels. The Mission participates regularly in the country team meetings, both at headquarters in Bogotá and at the regional level, providing updates and exploring ways to further expand mutual cooperation. As an example, the Mission cooperated with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to develop local assessments

for targeted quick impact projects in municipalities housing zones and points. To that end, the Mission provided personnel to participate in inter-agency assessment visits to zones and points during the months of February and March. The Colombian Agency for Territorial Renovation, under the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Post-Conflict, was a key participant in this effort.

IV. Mission set up and structures

57. During the reporting period, the Mission moved quickly to reach full capacity. It is currently fully operational at its national headquarters in Bogotá and in eight regional offices and one subregional office in Bogotá, which began its activities on 17 January. Bucaramanga operated from temporary premises until 25 January, when a permanent office became operational. The same applied to the Quibdó regional office, which received permanent premises on 12 January. The Medellín regional office continues to operate from temporary premises, although transfer to the final premises is expected shortly.

A. Observers

58. During the reporting period, the Mission reached the authorized ceiling of 450 observers from 19 countries, of whom 58 were women (13 per cent).

59. Currently, observers of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism are deployed in 23 temporary local headquarters and 3 mobile temporary local teams — Agua Bonita (Caquetá department), Caño Indio (Norte de Santander department) and El Gallo (Córdoba department) — thereby covering all zones and points.

60. There was little progress in the expansion and improvement of the local headquarters of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, despite commitments of the authorities to do so by the end of January. As a result, the Mission was unable to deploy its full contingent of observers to local headquarters, as planned; some 200 observers (as well as 20 United Nations Volunteers and 8 professional civilian staff) remained either at Mission headquarters in Bogotá or in the Mission's eight regional offices pending the availability of space at local headquarters. In addition, security and infrastructure improvements that had been foreseen for local headquarters (such as the building of perimeter fencing and the installation of security lighting) are yet to be made. During the meeting of my Special Representative with the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification Commission on 21 February, the Government indicated that it would proceed with improvements to local headquarters. On 9 March, the Government signed an agreement with contractors to improve local sites.

B. Coordination and substantive

61. My Deputy Special Representative for Colombia, Tania Patriota of Brazil, arrived at the Mission on 3 February.

62. The Mission has made significant progress in the staffing of its eight regional offices. All regional offices are staffed with heads of office, liaison officers, national information officers and security officers.

63. The civilian staff deployed to local headquarters work closely with, and as an integral part of, the observer component. A determined effort was undertaken to recruit women to these positions as a means to ensure greater gender parity. Of the 17 professional posts at the local level and 30 United Nations Volunteers currently on board, 36 are women (76 per cent). As noted, there has been a delay in the deployment of substantive-section observers, owing to logistical delays in the expansion of the local headquarters. Those who have arrived at the Mission, following training, have been deployed to their corresponding regional offices, where they have been fully engaged in the work of regional teams and travel frequently to their local headquarters to interact as much as possible with members of the local tripartite Mechanism teams.

C. Mission support

64. The Mission continued to rely on existing United Nations capacity in Colombia to facilitate administrative, logistical and financial services, primarily through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The letter of assist for medical services, which provides for evacuation and medical coverage for Mission observers and camp health facilities, was signed with the Government of Colombia on 26 January 2017. The remaining letters of assist setting out the scope and description of logistical and administrative support to be provided by the Government to the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism and the Mission are approaching finalization.

65. As authorized in Security Council resolution 2307 (2016), costs relating to the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism are to be shared equally with the Government. Reimbursement for an initial submission of expenses by the Government took place on 28 February, and the second batch of Government invoices are now being processed for reimbursement.

66. In accordance with these cost-sharing provisions, the Government has, to date, provided 122 of a total of 158 vehicles required for the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism and the Mission. The remaining vehicles will continue to be deployed in accordance with the opening of the local headquarters. The Mission has contracted and deployed two helicopters to provide logistics support, movements and regularly scheduled and special flights for the local zones and points. This capability will provide crucial support for the process of the laying down of arms. For mobile and static communications in remote regions, the Government of Colombia has requested the Mission to assume full responsibility for the provision of telephone, radio and Internet connectivity services throughout the Mission, including the regional offices and local zones and points. All regional offices now have enhanced radio connectivity and high frequency, VHF and satellite telephones. With UNDP support, the Mission has rapidly established contracts for the provision of the full range of information technology and communications services to local sites. These contracts are now under implementation.

67. As at 16 March, of the 111 authorized international civilian staff, 88 were already serving with the Mission, 4 were scheduled to arrive and 23 were in the

process of being hired. Of the total 211 civilian staff posts authorized for the Mission, 148 have been recruited and are either serving with the Mission or have scheduled arrival dates. Most of the 79 remaining posts still under recruitment are in the national staff category. Of the civilian staff within the Mission, 47 per cent are women.

D. Safety and security of United Nations personnel

68. The Government of Colombia, specifically the National Police of Colombia, continues to provide security to the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism and the Mission. The Department of Safety and Security provides ongoing leadership and operational support and advice on the policies and procedures of the United Nations security management system, in close cooperation and liaison with the Colombian authorities.

69. The security management system covers the United Nations country team and the Mission in an integrated and unified security structure, under the responsibility of the Designated Official, in line with the provisions of the memorandum of the Secretary-General dated 28 December 2016 regarding the authority of the Department of Safety and Security over security personnel and assets of peacekeeping and special political missions. The Chief Security Adviser/Chief Security Officer reports and serves as the principal adviser on safety and security to the Designated Official. In addition, the Chief Security Adviser/Chief Security Officer provides advice to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on all matters related to safety and security regarding the Mission.

70. All regional offices include a regional security officer. The regional security officers are responsible for guaranteeing compliance with the policies and procedures of the United Nations security management system within their area. Under the coordination and technical guidance of the respective field security coordination officers, the regional security officers advise the heads of regional offices and the Chief of Regional Observers on security issues. Mission security focal points have been designated in each zone and point, in order to liaise and coordinate with the regional security officers. Field security coordination officers and regional security officers participated in the monitoring of the movement of FARC-EP to zones and points.

71. As a result of the security risk management developed for the Mission, the predicted levels of risk in relation to most identified threats (attack by spoilers, crossfire and violent demonstrations) vary between low and medium. From the point of view of security, the activities planned for the Mission are viable insofar as the relevant risk management measures are fully implemented. The threat of landmines continues to pose considerable risk in some areas.

E. Conduct and discipline

72. The Mission is strongly committed to preventing acts of sexual exploitation and abuse and any misconduct involving its personnel. Following a risk analysis at the Mission headquarters and regional offices, a variety of preventive measures

have been put in place, including a conduct and discipline field visit programme undertaken by the Conduct and Discipline Team to offices in the Mission area of responsibility. Regular meetings with women's organizations at the national and local levels and close contact with communities remain important tools of prevention. An immediate response team was established, as was a roster composed of selected staff members and international observers to respond in a timely and appropriate manner to any suspected case.

73. In the light of the multiple challenges posed by the mandate of the Mission and the potential impact on the work environment of any case of misconduct, a plan to train all Mission personnel on prohibited conduct was developed to ensure a broad knowledge by personnel of their obligations, including maintaining strict standards of impartiality and respect for the population, as well as an environment free of discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority.

74. The Mission established a conduct and discipline task force that is led by my Special Representative and is composed of senior Mission staff, to review and discuss preventive measures, identify gaps and decide on further measures regarding conduct and discipline. In that regard, and following recommendations from the task force, a conduct and discipline sub-working group composed of different Mission components developed and reviewed training materials and the welfare policy to ensure that misconduct does not take place. Furthermore, posters and calendars underscoring the zero-tolerance policy and informing of reporting lines have been disseminated to all offices, Mission headquarters and regional offices.

V. Observations

75. Colombia's remarkable journey towards peace has continued. The images witnessed in February of thousands of FARC-EP members making their final march into the zones where they will begin their reintegration into civilian life and FARC-EP will transform into a political organization were images of peace that many Colombians thought they would never see. These historic steps forward, as part of a comprehensive peace agreement, are testament to the resilience of the peace process and the commitment of the parties.

76. We should not lose sight of this momentous progress, even as the peace process now squarely confronts the challenges of implementation. In this undertaking it faces hurdles that are not unusual in peace implementation, in particular where the scope of the tasks envisaged in the peace agreement stretches resources and capacities under demanding time constraints. As I observed in my last report to the Council (S/2016/1095), the transition from war to peace in Colombia faces unique difficulties, including a pattern of insecurity in rural areas long affected by the conflict, with strong linkages to a thriving illicit economy. The violence against human rights defenders is of serious concern. Moreover, the first steps towards implementation coincide with the opening phase of campaigning for general elections due to be held in May 2018, which carries its own set of complications.

77. In dealing with the complexities in Colombia, the primary asset of the peace process remains the determination on the part of the leadership of the Government of Colombia and FARC-EP to achieve the goal of a sustainable peace, including the transition of FARC-EP into a political organization, the reintegration of its members

and the provision of peace dividends to the people and areas most in need of security, stability and development. That determination has not been diminished by the challenges encountered since the signing of the peace agreement in November 2016, as illustrated in particular by the full respect for the ceasefire by both parties throughout the reporting period. In that respect, the commitment of Colombian security forces — the army and police — to the process will remain a foundation for the consolidation of peace.

78. There are other factors of strength. In its contacts with the diverse sectors of Colombian society — the Church, political parties, the private sector, civil society organizations, women's groups, ethnic organizations and local communities — the Mission has found strong support for efforts to ensure the sustainability of the peace process. There is no debate about the need to end definitively a conflict that has spanned generations, even if, for some, doubts, misgivings and objections to parts of the peace agreement remain. The peace process has genuine roots in this broad national consensus across political divides.

79. These assets notwithstanding, there are matters that the United Nations, in concurrence with the Government of Colombia and FARC-EP, deems urgent, particularly given the dynamic process of the laying down of arms and the transformation of FARC-EP into a political party, both of which are to be completed within the next three months. Several sensitive issues have been mentioned in this report, ranging from quicker implementation of the amnesty law to the requirement of health care in the zones. Others will become increasingly sensitive as time goes by, including security guarantees and the prospects for productive livelihood following the laying down of arms. Increasingly, the process will also be judged throughout the most affected areas by the delivery of concrete peace dividends.

80. Much of the responsibility for advancing the implementation of the peace agreement rests with the Government at the national, departmental and local levels. However, the private sector and civil society can also bring their resources and ingenuity to bear. The international community has its contribution to make to this common effort, and rightly sees in the Colombian peace process a much-needed message of encouragement that deadly conflict can be resolved by peaceful means.

81. I would like to thank once again the Member States, principally but not exclusively, from the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States for their crucial contributions of observers to the Mission. The Mission reaching its full deployment level, with an exemplary percentage of female observers, was only possible thanks to the responsiveness of contributing countries. I would also like to acknowledge the continuing support of the guarantor nations, Cuba and Norway, and the accompanying nations, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Chile.

82. Lastly, I wish to commend my Special Representative, Jean Arnault, and his team for their serious and determined efforts to implement the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Colombia, as well as the close cooperation with the United Nations country team, which has its own important roles to play in facilitating the implementation of the peace agreement. The United Nations will continue to provide its utmost support to a peace process that is owned and led by the Colombian parties and the Colombian people.

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Letter dated 24 March 2017 from the Chairperson of the Peacebuilding Commission addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to the statement by the President of the Security Council of 20 January 2017 (S/PRST/2017/2) in which, inter alia, he encouraged continued close and effective cooperation between the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and the Peacebuilding Commission in support of sustainable peace in West Africa and emphasized the convening role of the Commission, in collaboration with UNOWAS, in mobilizing the support of the relevant stakeholders in advancing the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel.

In this connection, the Commission convened a meeting to discuss the situation in the Sahel on 6 March 2017. The Commission was briefed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and Head of UNOWAS, Mohamed Ibn Chambas; the High Representative of the African Union for Mali and the Sahel, Pierre Buyoya; the Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), Najim Elhadj Mohamed; the European Union Special Representative for the Sahel, Angel Losada; the Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa of the United Nations Development Programme, Abdoulaye Mar Dieye; and the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, Oscar Fernandez-Taranco. Representatives of the countries of the G-5 Sahel, namely Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and the Niger, also participated in the meeting.

The briefers welcomed the recent positive political developments in the region, but also expressed serious concerns over the fragile security situation in the Sahel, particularly with regard to the spread of terrorist attacks across the region, some of which are connected to transnational organized crime. They stressed the need for enhanced cooperation, coordination and coherence in the ongoing national, regional and international efforts to address the political, security, humanitarian and development challenges of the region, especially among the numerous initiatives and studies on the Sahel. Several speakers cited underdevelopment as the root cause of many of the challenges, and called for greater investment in the region's infrastructure. They also highlighted the need for increased commitment and support to the region by both bilateral and multilateral partners.

Members of the Commission welcomed the opportunity to discuss the situation in the Sahel, and recognized the role that the Commission can play, through its convening and advisory role, in sustaining international attention towards the region's challenges. A number of the Commission members welcomed stronger collaboration between the Commission and UNOWAS in the implementation of the integrated strategy, and pointed out the need for greater efforts to coordinate the varying regional and international strategies on the Sahel. Several members also invited the Security Council to share with the Commission the results of the Council's mission to the Lake Chad Basin in early March.

I wish to inform you that, as a follow-up to this meeting, I intend to further consult with Mr. Chambas and the members of the Commission on the practical ways in which the Commission can strengthen its collaboration with UNOWAS in implementing the integrated strategy. I also intend to undertake and organize a variety of activities in connection with advancing the implementation of the integrated strategy and, to this end, to mobilize the support of other relevant stakeholders, such as the World Bank and the African Development Bank.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **Cho** Tae-yul
Chairperson
Peacebuilding Commission